

NAME Joseph B. Bustillos

TERM PROJECT: INTERIM REPORT

SUBJECT CHOSEN: John Wycliff, English heretic

I CHOSE THIS SUBJECT BECAUSE: I have a real interest in the men most noted for their involvement in the Reformation. What was it that caused them to break with the Church, a part from all the biases given by the Protestant and Roman churches.
ARE YOU HAVING DIFFICULTY WITH THIS PROJECT?

The only trouble I'm having is finding unbiased material.

What is "unbiased" material?

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Joseph Bustillos

Grade

B+

Course History 221

Critique of Term Project

for Fr. Richard Trane, S.J.

Format:

Excellent: Very Good: Good; Adequate; Unsatisfactory

Journal of Research

1. Procedure

Excellent: Very Good: Good: Adequate: Unsatisfactory.

2. Progressive limitation of the Topic.

Excellent: Very Good: Good: Adequate: Unsatisfactory.

3. Final Statement of Research Problem

Excellent, Very Good: Good: Adequate: Unsatisfactory

Bibliography

1. Final Search Bibliography

Excellent: Very Good: Good, Adequate: Unsatisfactory

2. Selection of Initial Readings from Search Bibliography

Excellent: Very Good: Good, Adequate: Unsatisfactory

Further Comment

A good paper, which showed use of materials available. You are too prone to making observations which are too broad & not soundly based on theological knowledge. You recognize the various views of the authors well enough, but you rather lumped all together equally. His ideas on Dominion are primary & his ideas on Transubstantiation lost him his protection.

The paper didn't sufficiently differentiate
his positions to show clearly
which were primary & which
were not.
Some typographical errors uncleaned up
& some spelling errors

A RESEARCH JOURNAL ON JOHN WYCLIFFE, D.D.

by

JOSEPH B. BUSTILLOS

A Paper Submitted to Father Trame, S.J. of the
History Department of Loyola Marymount University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

HS 221

May 6

1977

INTRODUCTION

The best that any one can guess as to the year of his birth is 1328. Beyond that little else is known about the life of John Wycliffe until he began his studies at Balliol College, Oxford. Taking his master's degree in 1358 and his doctorate in 1372 Wycliffe looked forward to a promising career. His dreams never blossomed however. So, five years before his death in 1384 John began promoting the views that is most remembered for.

Why is this evidence
of "Bras"?

March 8.

Today I made my inevitable journey to our campus library to do research on the life of the famed heretic John Wycliffe. Today's research began by peering into the voluminous pages of the New Catholic Encyclopedia.

As can be expected the article on Wycliffe was colored by Catholic bias. The article was very quick to establish that Dr. Wycliffe, while being a lettered scholar, was inconsistent in his theological conclusions. And of all the discrepancies attributed to the man his error concerning Transubstantiation stood out the most.

Seeing as it was among Wycliffe's bigger errors I turned to the article on Transubstantiation in the big N.C.E. I was immediately hit by a barrage of technical terms matched with abstract concepts (more than this innocent college freshman can handle). In the end, however, I was left with these two thoughts:

1. Transubstantiation is not the destruction of one substance and the substitution of another in its place, but a single action by which God, who has power over all being, changes the entire substance of the bread into the entire substance of Christ's body. The substance of bread ceases, not by way of annihilation, but by way of conversion into the body of Christ and the species of bread that remain acquire a relationship in Christ's body that is like the relationship between a container and its contents.

2. How could the simple teachings of the carpenter from Galilee (i.e., Jesus the Christ) have in a mere two thousand years travel to the outer limits of abstract thinking, almost to the point of losing their original purpose or commission (i.e., the salvation of the souls of men, not just intellectuals. Cf. "I am come to

call the sinners to repentance and not the righteous.")?

But he also said "This is my body" a simple phrase but what does it mean? The answer

March 12

Even though time did not permit me to do any new research I would like to make this observation. In the Spirit of Liberal Arts, that is, to gain knowledge and to realistically apply it to ones existence and to the improvement of the welfare of ones brother, I would like to make some observations on previously discussed material and its relevance to my own experience.

after reading the small article on John Wycliffe in the N.C.E. I was stung by this one allegorical thought: why is it that there must be a death in the family before the brothers and sisters of the deceased begin to count their own blessings and remember the love of their Father? John Wycliffe, in making his point, practically committed "spiritual suicide" (it must certainly be confessed that his denial of Transubstantiation was a foolish move). And even then his simple, maybe even naive, points were not heard by the church. *They were heard indeed & the flea's sting caused a painful reaction*
He was no more than a flea on the side of an elephant.

From his example we should take heed. In our own age, as in his, when the governing bodies in the church are so attentive to the "how" and "what" aspects of our spiritual health we cannot allow ourselves to lose sight of the "why." It is most likely that his inconsistencies are a sign of the desire of his heart to get away from the structured aspects of religious experience and into something that is within human grasp, that is that God, the almighty creator of all, desires a personal relationship with each of us as individuals as well as a community. I know that this insight may be a bit too far idealistic

has great implications for ones spiritual development. And since we have are concepts unimpaired simple?

and naive, but it is hopes and motives like this that changed Peter, the boastful fisherman of Galilee, into Peter the Rock.

'You are the Messiah,' Simon Peter answered,
'the Son of the living God.' Matt.16.16
... I hold this against you, though: you have
turned aside from your early love. Keep firmly in
mind the heights from which you have fallen.
Repent and return to your former deeds. If you
do not repent I will come to you and remove your
lampstand from its place. Rev. 2.4-5
'I have loved you,' says the LORD.
Malachi 1.2a

March 16.

Today I read articles from the Dictionary of the Bible by John L. McKenzie, the Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia (Pheiffer, Vos and Rea the editors), and the Bible Helps section of the Thompson Chain-Reference Bible. Each article that I read was basically about the origin and growth of the Bible into English.

It was very interesting to note the differences of opinions in these three "reference" books. John McKenzie, being a Jesuit, takes very little time in establishing that John Wycliffe had little if anything to do with the version of the Bible attributed to him. He was simply an English heretic that was overly concerned with making the Bible available to everyone in the vernacular. The other two "reference" books, the Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia and the Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, on the other hand, vigorously "canonized" John Wycliffe as the "first of the great Bible translators of Brittain." According to the W.B.E., Wycliffe's importance to the Reformation was such that he was called "the morning star of the Reformation."

Not only more

After reviewing the above reference materials it has become apparent to this student that for him to conduct an adequate investigation into the opinions and actual life of John Wycliffe that Dr. Wycliffe's own

writings will have to be read.

March 20

Today I mistakenly read the first ten pages of Vaughan's book The Life and Opinions of John de Wycliffe. The mistake was that I thought that I was reading Wycliffe's own words when actually I was reading Vaughan's. I was all prepared to state how developed "Wycliffe's" Protestant ideas were. Oh Well!

It must be confessed, however, that Vaughan's bias is thoroughly Protestant. He began this first chapter by denying the papal government's "political" and spiritual authority. He pointed to the papacy's rise in power, both civic and ecclesiastical, as being the doing of Gregory I. He also commented on the ancient theocracy and how the church was never to be a worldly kingdom: "give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." The author expressed a desire for the church to return to the first principles of Faith, Hope, Love and a departure from the ritualism of Catholic worship (it must be noted that this book was originally written in the mid-1800's).

While the author made very little mention of Wycliffe at least in the first ten pages) his comments are no doubt in preparation for Wycliffe's theology. If that be the case, then, God willing, I must turn to Wycliffe's printed page.

March 24

Today I read a selection in Robert Vaughan's book The Life and Opinions of John de Wycliffe, D.D. in which Wycliffe's views are finally, finally laid out in "black and white." It is interesting

to note that this section does not occur until half way into the second volume.

The nutshell of Wycliffe's first statement can be found in the following verses:

A dispute arose among them about who should be regarded as the greatest. He said: 'Earthly kings lord over their people. Those who exercise authority over them are called their benefactors. Yet it cannot be that way among you. Let the greater among you be as the junior, the leader as the servant.'

- Luke 22.24-26

John Wycliffe spent some time in the court of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. His experience as a clerical advisor in the English courts brought Wycliffe to question the church's role in secular affairs.. According to the verses noted above. and the thirteenth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, the believers of Jesus were commanded to play a passive role in society, if not also among themselves. But what Wycliffe saw happening in the English courts was anything but passive; Popes and bishops holding monarchs at bay with the threat of excommunication, and kings threatening the hierarchy with military take over. In Wycliffe's eyes these actions were nowhere close to being what our Lord desired for his followers.

Wycliffe, therefore, took the liberty to attack the church's policy regarding secular affairs. Wycliffe down-played the role of the pope and planted the seed that lead to the denial of papal authority. It is important at this time to note that because of men like Wycliffe there was a development or at least a resurgence of the principle that salvation and/or the bestowal of grace is by the faith of the individual believer and not by any action or desire of the church's representative.

This is not a Catholic position. It denies the whole sacramental position.

al broad statement
which cries out for
proof - Perhaps
some Churchmen but
"the Church"?

Concerning Wycliffe's denouncement of the church's involvement in civil administration it becomes evident that Wycliffe had failed to take into consideration that at different periods during the Middle Ages the church was the only institution that contained any resemblance to civilization. Nonetheless, it is not necessary to throw all of his principles out because of this. The church has at times taken part in the world (secular) affairs in a way that was anything but christian. But the desire of at least a true reformer is not to go from one extreme to another; that is from being totally cut off from the world to being totally absorbed by it, but to find "middle ground."

March 28

Today I began reading K.B. McFarlane's book, John Wycliffe and English Nonconformity. In the opening notes to his book McFarlane makes some very interesting observations. He points out that one method of studying history is to study the lives of various important men that lived in that period.

In looking at Dr. Wycliffe, McFarlane noted that some purely factual evidence was nonexistent, such as the identity of his parents, his date and place of birth, and what kind of atmosphere made up his early years.

What we do know about Wycliffe is taken from his voluminous works. Even though he is rather impersonal in his writings we are able to gather that the man was "learned, subtle, ingenious, opinionated, tirelessly argumentative and rather humourless."

McFarlane then begins to set the stage for the remainder of the book. The university system of the the later Middle Ages and other aspects of Medieval England are discussed.

April 1

Today I continued reading McFarlane's book on Wycliffe. And McFarlane continued to describe the university system. From the picture that he presented I gather that, while it was nothing like it is today, it was not as difficult for an aspiring student to raise the funds for a college education as I was previously led to believe.

Now the time it took an individual to earn, for example, a Doctorate in Divinity was another story. "An undergraduate who had started at fifteen would be at least thirty-three before he had completed his training." In the case of John Wycliffe he was at least forty when he received his D.D. It must be noted, however, that the great length of time taken to earn his degree can be accounted for. He earned his bachelor of arts by 1356, then allowed his studies to be interrupted by administrative duties, such that he did not receive his D.D. until about 1372.

April 5

Tonight as I was reading McFarlane's book on John Wycliffe I noted one thing that was mentioned, that I did not find in any of the other sources that I have read. McFarlane mentions that between the years 1361 and 1366 Wycliffe resided in a small Oxford college founded by Simon Islip, then archbishop of Canterbury. The college housed four monks from Islip's own cathedral priory of Christ Church and eight "needy and deserving" secular clerks. A dispute arose, however, when the monks were given the governing rights including the office of warden. There was at this time a bit of resentment growing between the orders and the secular clergy so for this to happen was just more fuel for the fire. After a number of years

It was a long standing quarrel!

Islip confessed his mistake and converted the college to handle just secular clergy. For these new statutes to be deemed valid they not only had to receive royal assent but also that of Canterbury cathedral priory. But before any of this could be completed Islip died. To add insult to injury, the only monk to attain the primacy of Canterbury between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries became archbishop. Wycliffe and his fellow clerks soon found themselves residing at a different address. This incident did not create a very healthy opinion of the monastic orders in Wycliffe's mind.

It must be noted that McFarlane is no doubt of Protestant heritage. While quoting Wycliffe's enemies as saying that he was "the flower of Oxford, in philosophy second to none, without a rival in the discipline of the schools," he makes no hesitation to mention that Wycliffe had a quick temper, was arrogant at times, and pretty much void of anything resembling a sense of humor.

April 9

Today I continued reading McFarlane's book on John Wycliffe. In the section that I read, McFarlane went to great lengths in giving the political background of the times in which John found himself. But in all of the pages that I read only two things stood out. They were "the two great issues over which the battle in Wycliffe's day was fought... the taxation of the clergy and the pope's claim to appoint to the high offices of the church in England." McFarlane went on to describe the predicament that the taxation issue put the English clergy into. Not only were the clerks taxed by the state but also by the papacy. Then there was the infamous problem of who is going to appoint the higher ecclesiastical rulers.

Better "thorny"

But this would
be ~~simony~~ & the
whole thrust of the
Church's policy was
against this. They
may have brought it
sold but this was
a sin & men recognised
it as such.

The whole question on
dominion is crucial
& central. It is ultimately
destructive of any valid
exercise of authority because
who knows whom to
be in mortal sin.

April 13

Tonight I read a section in McFarlane's book entitled "Wycliffe in Politics." One thing that struck me was the medieval concept of ministry. They saw the pastoral position as being a possession that ~~could be bought or sold.~~ The spiritual significance seems to be missing. McFarlane did a good job in showing that the mind of the medieval man operated in a different fashion to that of the modern man. *not in this*

McFarlane mentioned the controversy over the question of lordship. No one questioned where the origin of authority was, but how it was administered. On one side there were the extreme papalists such as Giles of Rome, who spoke of the church as being intrusted with all power in heaven and on earth. Then there were those such as Wycliffe who attempted to down-play the role of the papacy.

This question led to the question concerning a ruler living in sin; is his authority (being God-given) abandoned? At first this question was leveled at temporal rulers exclusively, but soon enough ecclesiastical rulers were asked the same question.. This question caused havoc in the church and was wielded by many a theologian, especially Richard FitzRalph (circa 1348), in their attacks upon churchmen.

Later while employed by John of Gaunt (1376) John Wycliffe was put on trial for, among other "heresies," his views on Lordship. Because of a riotous crowd and other complications Wycliffe's trial never really got started.

April 17

Tonight I read a small section involving Dr. Wycliffe's life in the years around 1378. These were the years when his views were beginning to get him the kind of attention that he did not want.

disastrous!

1/21/77

Wycliffe's career as a heretic might have been shortened had it not been for the unfortunate death of Gregory XI.

Another unfortunate event occurred as a result of Gregory's death, the Great Schism. It was not until a quarter of a century after John's death that Catholic Christendom was again united under one pope. It seems odd to me that while the church was busy fighting the mob of heretics that made up the outer fringes of the "ecclesia" the very core, the papal seat, was torn. The throne of Peter was claimed by two men.

April 20

One thing to note out of today's research: was that the last five years of the Oxford scholar's life were the most active in his heretical career. McFarlane, throughout his book, has tried to maintain a balance between a strictly Protestant or a strictly Catholic viewpoint. McFarlane is coming from an English background and so his bias, which is very subtle, is more a political one than a religious one.

McFarlane described Wycliffe's later activities as a mountain lion backed up into a box-canyon. His actions were intense but ill-calculated and unplanned. He is to be noted, according to McFarlane, for his personal stamina in the pressures he faced rather than for the "truths" he strove to proclaim.

April 25

In the outbreak of the schism, Wycliffe favored the Italian pope Urban VI. It was not until later, with the continued division of the church, that Wycliffe began to lose faith in the papacy as an institution, viewing the two rival popes as the two halves of anti-Christ.

Well this can be said
but it is not pertinent.
This very issue was
on the nature of authority
& Tradition

According to McFarlane, Wycliffe had no desire to break with Rome. Why it happened is still a subject of controversy.

What is certain is that beginning in 1378 Wycliffe was being freely criticised for his extreme reliance on the Bible in preference to the accumulated wisdom of the church. He accepted scripture as God's Law and founded his conclusions upon it, only to have them condemned. Unlike most "heretics" who insisted on special interpretations due to the Bible's "inconsistencies and obscurities" Wycliffe felt Biblical interpretation unnecessary. He felt that "all Christians, and lay lords in particular, ought to know holy writ and to defend it"; and again elsewhere he writes, "no man is so rude a scholar but that he may learn the words of the Gospel according to his simplicity." But the exaltation of scripture was only one half of Wycliffe's purpose. The other was to suppress the traditions of the "helplessly misguided" church that rejected his teachings. In his writing entitled On the Church, using the doctrine of strict predestination Wycliffe explained away the authority of the church officials. He held the principle that all those that receive salvation are predestined, and that no man knows whether he is numbered among the elect (not even the pope). The problem this created was that if one is uncertain about the pope's standing in the kingdom of God how could one deem his words as being authoritative.

One personal note: I took Father Ryan's course on Christian Mysticism last semester. In it one day we got into a conversation on who we thought had an extra-special one-to-one relationship with God. It was interesting for me to see how many people felt that because of the pope's office that he talks to God much in the same manner as Moses in the Great Theophany. It was against this kind of reasoning

that Wycliffe fought.

April 29

Tonight I read a chapter out of J.A. Robson's book Wyclif and the Oxford Schools. After rambling on for some time on the subject of predestination and whether God was the author of sin. I began to realize what it was that he was trying to convey. He was setting forth to ask if Wycliffe was just a product of his society or if he was actually a man of great intellect.

Not to be unkind but Robson's book would make an excellent bedtime story for an aspiring student of theology. After mentioning Wycliffe's name an average of once every four pages one tends to wonder how John ever got first billing in the book's title. One good thing must be said about Robson's book: it motivated me to go on to other research materials.

May 2

Today I read the first chapter from a book entitled Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus. The book is the fourteenth volume in a series of twenty-six books put out as the Library of Christian Classics. The collection is designed to present a selection of the most indispensable Christian treatises written prior to the end of the sixteenth century. Matthew Spinka, D.D., is responsible for editing this volume.

It did not take me long to realize that this book had a Protestant bias. Although the Wycliffe presented in this book was a bit more saintly than the one in McFarlane's, the bare facts (which are necessary in a good history) were presented rapidly and thoroughly.

obviously since
it is sanctioned by
a canon of the
Council of Trent &
lies at the bottom of the
idea of the Real Presence.
"This is my Body" as he
holds bread in his
hand = ?

There was essentially no new material presented in this chapter that has not been covered already by McFarlane. One thing did become clear however, and that is the chronology of events in Wycliffe's life.

May 4

In reading this paper one may be struck by the fact that thusfar my research has not taken any distinct direction. The reason for this is that in my research I was looking for something in the life of Wycliffe that I could really sink my teeth into. It is interesting that the topic that I've finally come up with is one that I began this paper with: Transubstantiation and the Eucharist.

I was in the middle of McFarlane's chapter on "Wycliffe the Heretic" when that word (i.e., Transubstantiation) started popping up. And when I read Advocates of Reform the distinction between transubstantiation and consubstantiation was made more clear to me. Also in Advocates... *there* was a condensation of Wycliffe's treatise On the Eucharist. Most Catholics rarely raise the question of the validity of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. And if one does start to ask questions about it he is often met with vague replies and comments about his "weak faith." But I feel that it is necessary for an individual to give his beliefs a "tune-up" from time to time. This tune-up is evidence that one is striving for that which is true (i.e., Jesus).

Therefore, if I was called upon to write a term project with the research that I have done and the information available to me I would write about John Wycliffe's views on the Eucharist.

Is not the cup of blessing we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ? - 1 Cor. 10.16

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